

A NEW URBAN WAVE - THE PARK CITY

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Summary

Despite multiple meetings and declarations on the need to assure an ecological projection to the science of urbanism, it must be agreed that we seem unable to reach an agreement on the requirements of such projection.

Today, there are some new urban waves which seem to take into consideration a noticeable need of a true ecological consciousness among urbanists and architects.

An urban area that some scientist call "diffuse city" needs to be ensure with adequate levels of urban comfort, suitability and safety.

The basic idea of the park city is to allow nature to penetrate into the diffuse city and give it form. The difficulties of these areas offers a huge opportunity to implement advanced technologies for building a safe and sane environment, for working on environmental healing, protection and conservation.

For the architecture and urbanism, the respect for the nature remain the most important factor which will cure and prevent all the disasters created by human beings ignorance and materialism. Looking closely to the history urban examples, it seems to be very clear the fact that the town is substantial dependent of the nature.

The future will show us the results of the application of this new urban wave of park-cities.

Keywords: new urbanism, ecological consciousness, environmental healing, park-city.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite multiple meetings and declarations on the need to assure an ecological projection to the science of urbanism, it must be agreed that we seem unable to reach an agreement on the requirements of such projection.

We are constantly assigning labels with “pre”, “neo” and “post”. Nowadays we can use labels with “meta”...because we live nowadays in the Metamodern Era, after the postmodern period which created chaos, pollution and huge disasters.

But we never find our label that will place ourselves on the way of questioning step by step: “where are we going now” or “what are we doing”? Where urbanism is going now?

In the past time, cities planners used to make previsions on what can happen in the future. Nowadays is seems to be very difficult to predict something. Therefore, today urban layouts request from the planners mainly a moral effort, not only a scientific one.

However, there are some urban waves which seem to take into consideration a noticeable need of a true ecological consciousness among urbanists and architects. This Consciousness should come from the sense of human responsibility to the sustainability and the future of our cities.

2. THE PARK CITIES, A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

In the history of the city we can see different breaks, many of them being between past and future...future which became present...The environment is continually changing, preserving or transforming the old, building up the present and promising the future. In our cities, the ancient urban spaces - antique agora, medieval main square, renescentist, baroque or neoclassical spaces, but also the modern public space - all have been degraded. They became mainly utilitarian spaces, often unfriendly and contaminated, loosing the real contact with its inhabitants. Cities peripheries became also polluted spaces from many points of view.

Therefore, our attention has focused on the way of urbanistic actions in the constituted city, acting trough a “*renovatio urbis*” policy, which has done, many times, good results, until now.



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If we look more closely at the consolidated city, usually described as urban space, it is clear that it is less and less characterized by continuity. The nowadays town it is increasingly composed of fragments. A closer look still reveals that even in its most dense parts there are fragments with different identities.

This phenomenon is a “natural” reflection of the fragmented world where we live nowadays.

The urban universe seems to be well known to us. But, since the 1960s, urbanists researchers reveal us that we are witnessing to the birth of a new urban phenomenon: a complementary urban realm is born. It is an urban area that some scientist call “diffuse city”. It is something distinct from the usual city peripheries, having special particularities and geography. It can be described like an urban “nebulae”, formed by small houses with garden, which it seems to spread over territory with no apparent direction. They take advantage of existing infrastructure, roads, local paths and main roads of countryside. They use the existing “fixed capital”, like electricity lines and drains, etc. Even on unsuitable terrain, over any obstacles, forming entire regions, year after year it grows in density. Finally, a big special environment is created, in which inhabitants do not live as country people do, but as city dwellers of this “urban nebulae”.

We can wonder why this phenomenon has not been studied more closely, because it seems to be present on large areas - it has been spreading on West, but also on the East Europe.

Nowadays we can find this kind of diffuses urban spaces in Romania also.

If we look closely all this urban wave, we can understand that the emergency of the inhabitants needs, of some special individual necessities, seems to be important factors among others, producing this fragmentation and the dispersion of our cities. In the late XX-th century this emergency of needs consolidated the individual urban consciousness and, as a result, a big part of Europe population does not accept nowadays to live organized and imprisoned in our typical urban systems. The city dwellers need a certain urban environment and a certain degree of urban comfort, their perception of these necessities being related to their psycho-emotional personality and to the motivations of their activities in the urban environment dictate. In that context, is noticeable a fact: many social practices indicate a more self-care attention, a higher attention to the urban space where they live. The awareness of the qualities of urban spaces grow, the perception of the physical appearance of the city is more subtle. Also, some urban researches accepted that another phenomenon, call “democratization of urban space”, is



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responsible in increasing the refuse of many inhabitants to live in the “constituted” town.

Because architects and urbanists have not seen the importance of this substantial part of the cities, developed like an urban nebulae, nowadays this areas need a big effort to be designed in a judicious way. We often prefer to work in the middle of the city, on monuments, airports, museums, stadiums, etc., which give indeed to our cities originality and personality. But, we forgot to think and to take care of the periphery and of these diffuse urban areas.

These urban areas need to be ensured with adequate levels of urban comfort, suitability and safety.

Looking closely to these nebulae, it seems that this wave is spreading in territory like natural elements do, like vegetation for example. In the past, the occupation of large territory with buildings was a specific way to create cities. But, nowadays this way of occupying large zones with small houses with gardens represent a particular phenomenon – opposite to the closed town, to the organized structures of the cities. Because of that particularity the urbanist Bernardo Secchi (Honor Mention of the 2004 Big Prize of Urbanism) says that it looks like a diffuse city and it spread like a park. Therefore he proposed the idea of the creation of a park-city.

The basic idea of the park city is to allow nature to penetrate into the diffuse city and give it form. The topography and the infrastructures of these territories should be re-thinking to respond to the urban dispersion phenomenon. An important fact is that, often, urbanists are not interested in these territories full of difficulties. However, precisely these difficulties offers a huge opportunity to implement advanced technologies for building a safe and sane environment, for working on environment healing, protection and conservation. One of the most important characteristics is that the park-city will have “soft” limits, an important flexibility, determined by the expansion and infiltration of the nature in urban spaces. This will help the city to grow easy, without efforts or dysfunctions.

Also, an important fact is represented by the new architectural approach for light-weight solution of pavilion housing, where articulation and overall layout are more important than vocabulary. This is a solution more innovative in its urban dimension than in its architectural language, helping the development of housing estate. Less bound by norms, this solution gives to the inhabitants considerable liberty in appropriating their living space and sustain the mutation of any pavilion areas towards the low-height, mixed-use green city: the park-city.



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3. CONCLUSIONS

This planning manner, proposed by Secchi, seems to be a new urban experiment of an organic city, adapted to the local topography and local conditions.

But, we should remind something very important: Bernardo Secchi forgot that this manner of layouts adaptation to local topography and other conditions is very old. It is coming from the wisdom of antiquity and even from the pre-urban period. The penetration of the nature into the cities was a significant phenomenon, even into the closed medieval towns: could be very clear exposed, or could be subtle.

In fact, the appearance exclusion of the nature from the constituted city hides a subtle "urban permeability", a special absorption of different natural and local environmental elements.

For the architecture and urbanism, the respect for the nature remain the most important factor which will cure and prevent all the disasters created by human beings ignorance and materialism. Looking closely to the historical urban examples, it seems to be very clear the fact that the town is substantial dependent of the nature.

The future will show us the results of the application of this new urban wave of park-cities.

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